

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.*

Jesus overcame Satan. That can't be overstated or overemphasized. And just as the outcome was never in doubt, it's known for certain what this all means for you, you have the victory and the righteousness of Jesus who overcame the devil. For your life that's the truth and the reality you have as you face temptation as a baptized child of God.

St. Matthew recorded for you by divine inspiration, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Right after the baptism of Jesus, he went or as Mark's account has it, he was thrown into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. The Lord faced temptation in this world. So long as you are in this world you will face temptation. It's not a matter of if, but when temptation attacks. If that wasn't enough to know you will face temptation, it's a battle fought on various fronts. There are three sources of temptation which attack you, your old Adam, the world, and the devil. All of these are at work, some stronger than others in different times in your lives or different circumstances but the danger is still the same. God calls you to fight against temptation and not give into its enticements.

It makes you uneasy to think about this because a great deal of this struggle is internal. The sinful heart is the seedbed for so many vile and heinous and shameful things the world has ever seen or even not seen. Thinking about temptation also makes one uneasy because it calls you to a new life that is different than what temptation is seeking to lure you into and live. The Christian life is different than a life which lives and delights in sin. It's a life of freedom to live in accord with what God teaches you as opposed to being a slave to sin.

God warns you and calls you to repentance for unrepentant sin and faith do not exist together. The Bible teaches this in various places such as 1 John 3, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God." The Christian life, then, is a struggle. The struggle against sin is a struggle that doesn't resign itself to defeat but keeps fighting against the old sinful man, the world, and the devil. The tools by which you do this are the word of God, the sacraments, and prayer. This is what Christians do, what you are called to do. You are to fight and resist temptation and to flee those things which seek to draw you into sin and away from God before it's too late.

In the Large Catechism we confess that, "we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be constantly attacked. No one may go on in security and carelessly, as though the devil were far from us. At all times we must expect and block his blows. Though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never stops or becomes tired. So when one temptation stops, there always arise others and fresh ones. So there is no help or comfort except to run here, take hold of the Lord's Prayer, and speak to God from the heart like this: 'Dear Father, You have asked me to pray. Don't let me fall because of temptations.' Then you will see that the temptations must stop and finally confess themselves conquered. If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space. For he has a serpent's head. If it finds an opening into which it can slip, the whole body will follow without stopping. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back."

Temptation is real. The devil is real. Sin is real. Be warned. Christians can fall away from the faith and be lost eternally. That's a real and deadly danger for each of you sitting here right now. Don't underestimate the seriousness of this all and think you can grow complacent or apathetic. You do well to remember that you, in Christ, have the power over temptation, sin, and the devil but they are still dangerous. A dog behind a fence can't bite you but if you jump over or wander into the yard you are the one to blame and get hurt or worse. Martin Luther has a famous saying regarding temptation which, in a sense, he says, "You can't keep the birds from flying around your head, but you can keep them

from building a nest in your hair.” That’s a very helpful well to think about temptation in this life as someone who is baptized and set free from the slavery of sin. Don’t let a nest be built in your hair. Likewise, don’t give the birds the twigs to build it either. Don’t play with fire. Pray instead as one who is baptized into Christ, “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Listen again to what your Lord Jesus did when tempted by the devil. Learn from him and take comfort in what he did as he did it for you. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Take this to heart what God teaches you and what you see with Jesus. God’s word is to be that on which you feast daily and find your very sustenance for life. Hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word of God as one who is baptized into Christ, united with him, and covered with his righteousness and all that this entails including his faithfulness and perfect obedience to the Father which did not nor could not fall into temptation and the crafts and assaults of the devil.

See the importance of memorizing Scripture and your Catechism which confesses Scripture. See and use the weapons against the devil, the world, and your fallen flesh. This is what it means to remember your baptism daily by turning from sin and desiring to live the new life you have in Christ. Part of this new life is using those fruit of the Spirit you have which are things like goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. Wisdom and discernment too come from being a student of God’s word and living it out in your life. How this plays out practically is for you to always fix your eyes on Christ and be a student of his word. Don’t put yourself into situations where you will be led into temptation and away from Christ and his word. Receive the Lord’s Supper regularly. Confess your sin to your pastor and receive absolution. Surround yourself with good Christian friends who themselves are doing these things as well and rejoice in the fellowship you have together as the Holy Spirit has gathered you together as his holy people.

Examine your life too and know where you struggle and where danger and sin crouch at the door seeking to devour you. This is where self-control and wisdom come into play. An alcoholic knows not to walk into a bar and order a drink. Someone struggling with sexual sin doesn’t put himself into situations that can get out of hand. This is war so know the tactics of your own sinful flesh, the fallen world around you, and the devil and don’t be easy prey or a flat-out sitting duck with a target on your head. That’s not what you have learned from Christ and what you have been called to be as his baptized child. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is one of the most often misquoted passages of Scripture, but it applies here in what it really says regarding temptation. “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” God is the one who delivers you even as he has taught you to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Dear people of God, those words of the Introit today speak volumes to you about who you are as a Christian facing temptation and who your God is as you face them. “When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to

befall you, no plague come near your tent. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.” So, what does this mean?

View temptation through Christ’s victory and see his rebuke of the devil. Notice how Jesus quotes the Bible to the devil, who quotes Scripture cherry picking what he wants, and fights off the devil with God’s word. In that first temptation to make stones loaves of bread Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8 about man living by every word which comes from the mouth of God. Really there is a whole context and story to this which is assumed anytime the Old Testament is quoted in the Gospels or other parts of the New Testament. Listen to this section in Deuteronomy 8 spoken to the people of Israel Jesus refers to then, and see it terms of you facing temptation and what this means that Christ has endured it and overcome it: “And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.”

The discipline of Jesus is the discipline of a Father to his Son, and you are sons of God through faith in Christ. Even as you face temptation you see what the result and outcome is as you fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith. You see in Christ you have the victory won for you and given to you. The Lord gives you this in your baptism and today as your sin is forgiven through his word, absolution, and Supper. And not only that but he strengthens you, preserves you, and guards and keeps you as his own through these means. The Father holds before your eyes Jesus who in weakness, hunger, and great suffering is the one whose life is always fully righteous and obedient to the Father and the law of God. Adam failed, the people in the wilderness who came out of Egypt failed, you in your life have failed. Jesus, however, did not nor could he fail for he is the Son of God and baptized into Christ his victory is your victory. The first Adam fell. The second Adam was faithful. Your old Adam is unrighteous. The Second Adam, Jesus, is your righteousness.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Take comfort today in Jesus. Temptation for you is something in which you have the victory in Christ, and you have the promise of God to take care of you now and the future rest and glory to come. When you pray the Lord’s Prayer you are praying as one who belongs to Christ and is covered with his righteousness. The very one who is perfectly obedient to God’s law, has overcome the devil, died for your sin, and gives you victory over death itself is the same God as the reading from Hebrews says, “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” He sees you in your suffering, sympathizes with you and prays for you at the throne of God.

That’s all for you dear people of God. Baptized into Christ your sin is forgiven, and you have the victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. Rejoice in Christ who gives this all to you freely and fully. Thank him for this new life, new hope, new strength, and new powers. The Lord will sustain you now and until that day when you reach your journey’s end, and you see your Lord face to face and you are raised to immortality and incorruption where temptation is no more and you and all of God’s saints live in that glorious new creation forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.